



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# Advisory Circular

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**Subject: VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE  
REPORTING PROGRAM – HAZARDOUS  
MATERIALS**

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**Date:** 00/00/05

**Initiated by:** ADG-1

**AC No:** 121.XX

**Change:**

## **1. Purpose.**

a. Holders of certificates under 14 CFR parts 119 and 125 and foreign air carriers issued operations specifications under 14 CFR part 129 (operators, you, your) who accept hazardous materials (HAZMAT) for transport by air may voluntarily disclose to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA, we, us) violations of certain hazardous materials regulations (HMR) under the voluntary disclosure reporting program. This Advisory Circular (AC) provides guidance for you when reporting to FAA instances of noncompliance through this voluntary disclosure reporting program.

b. You are encouraged, but not required, to develop internal evaluation programs that monitor your compliance with the HMR and your policies and procedures so that you achieve a high-level of safety and security. However, you may voluntarily disclose certain apparent violations following the guidance contained in this AC, even though you have not established an internal evaluation program.

## **2. What Violations This AC May Cover.**

The voluntary disclosure reporting program discussed in this AC applies to violations of 49 CFR part 175, which cover certain reporting, training, acceptance, loading, unloading, handling and stowage requirements. It does not apply to violations of 49 CFR parts 171, 172, and 173, or to violations of 14 CFR.

## **3. Why Do We Need this AC?**

We believe that aviation safety is well served by incentives for you to identify and correct your own instances of noncompliance and to invest your resources in efforts to prevent a recurrence. Civil penalties under our compliance and enforcement program are considered a means to promote compliance with the regulations. In addition to the deterrence achieved by the appropriate use of civil penalties, the public interest is also served by positive incentives to promote and achieve compliance. Our policy of forgoing civil penalty actions when you detect a violation, disclose the violation to us, and take prompt corrective action to ensure the violation does not recur is designed to encourage compliance with the regulations, foster safe operating practices, and promote the development of internal evaluation programs.

#### **4. Understanding The Key Terms And Phrases Used In This AC.**

**a.** Evidence - written documentation or reports that support your analysis of the apparent violation and the resulting elements of the proposed comprehensive fix. Evidence may come from, among other things:

- (1)** Reviewing documents or manuals.
- (2)** Examining equipment.
- (3)** Observing activities.
- (4)** Interview data.

**b.** Appropriate Regional HAZMAT Branch Manager (HAZMAT Branch Manager) – the HAZMAT Branch Manager in the regional office that holds the operators certificate or, in the case of a foreign air carrier, the regional office closest to the apparent violation. (See Appendix II)

**c.** Comprehensive Fix – corrective steps and actions to prevent the apparent violation you voluntarily disclosed under this AC from recurring.

**d.** Satisfactory Fix - a comprehensive fix that you have completed on schedule to FAA's satisfaction.

**e.** Implementation Period - the period of time, after you have initially notified us of the apparent violation and before the HAZMAT Branch Manager makes a final assessment.

#### **5. How The Voluntary Disclosure Program Works.**

**a.** We believe the open sharing of apparent violations and a cooperative, as well as, an advisory approach to solving problems will enhance and promote aviation safety. We will issue you a letter of correction, instead of a civil penalty action, for covered instances of noncompliance that are voluntarily disclosed to us under the terms of this AC. Once we issue the letter of correction, the case will be closed. However, we will reopen the case if you fail to complete the comprehensive fix in accordance with the letter of correction and we may take legal enforcement action.

**b.** This voluntary disclosure program consists of six steps:

**(1)** You make the initial notification to the HAZMAT Branch Manager of an apparent violation.

**(2)** We respond to your initial notification and request your written report.

(3) You provide a written report to the HAZMAT Branch Manager.

(4) We evaluate your written report.

(5) We review the proposed Comprehensive Fix you submitted with the written report and concur or recommend changes.

(6) You carry out your Comprehensive Fix and conduct a subsequent audit.

(7) The HAZMAT Branch Manager makes a final assessment.

## **6. You Make the Initial Notification To The HAZMAT Branch Manager Of An Apparent Violation.**

a. The voluntary disclosure reporting program applies only when you discover an apparent violation and notify the HAZMAT Branch Manager before we learn of the apparent violation. You must make the initial notification within 24 hours of the discovery of the apparent violation.

b. This notification may be in any form, such as telephonic, fax, e-mail, oral, or written. (See Appendix II for Regional HAZMAT office phone numbers.)

c. In your notification you should:

(1) Describe the apparent violation, including the duration of time that it remained undetected, as well as how and when you discovered it.

(2) Verify that noncompliance ceased after you identified it.

(3) Describe the immediate action taken to terminate the conduct that resulted in the apparent violation and identify the person who was responsible for taking the immediate action.

(4) Verify that you are continuing your ongoing evaluation to identify any systemic problems and determine the corrective actions necessary to prevent recurrence.

(5) Identify the person and organization responsible for preparing the comprehensive fix.

(6) Assure us that a detailed written report will be provided to the HAZMAT Branch Manager within 30 working days.

## **7. We Respond To Your Initial Notification and Request Your Written Report.**

a. Once you notify the HAZMAT Branch Manager of the violation, we will respond with a written acknowledgement that we received your initial notification. The written acknowledgement is sent instead of a letter of investigation.

**b.** Our written acknowledgement will include a request for your written report, the report must be prepared as described in paragraph 8 of this AC and Appendix I. The HAZMAT Branch Manager will open an enforcement investigative report that will be closed out with a letter of correction, unless the comprehensive fix has not been completed.

### **8. You Provide A Written Report To The HAZMAT Branch Manager.**

**a.** You must provide a written report to the HAZMAT Branch Manager within 30 working days after the initial notice of the apparent violation. The written report must (see Appendix I):

- (1) List the specific FAA regulations that may have been violated.
- (2) Describe the apparent violation, including time it remained undetected, as well as how and when you detected it.
- (3) Describe the immediate action you took to terminate the conduct that resulted in the apparent violation, including when it was taken, and who took it.
- (4) Explain why the apparent violation was inadvertent.
- (5) Provide evidence that demonstrates the seriousness of the apparent violation and your analysis of that evidence.
- (6) Describe the proposed comprehensive fix, outlining the planned corrective steps, and a time schedule for completing the fix. You must identify the company official responsible for completing the comprehensive fix.

### **9. We Evaluate Your Written Report.**

**a.** We will evaluate and ensure that the following conditions are met when you report an apparent violation:

- (1) You have notified the HAZMAT Branch Manager of the apparent violation within 24 hours after detecting it and before we have learned of it by other means.
- (2) The apparent violation was inadvertent.
- (3) The apparent violation does not indicate a lack, or reasonable question of, your qualification to hold a certificate, or, in the case of a foreign air carrier, operations specifications.
- (4) You took immediate action to terminate the conduct that resulted in the apparent violation.

(5) You have developed or are developing a comprehensive fix satisfactory to us. The comprehensive fix includes a follow-up self-audit to ensure that the corrective action taken prevents a recurrence or noncompliance. This self-audit is in addition to any audits we conducted.

b. Ordinarily, we will not forgo legal enforcement action if you inform us of the apparent violation during, or in anticipation of, our investigation/inspection or in association with an accident or incident.

#### **10. We Review The Proposed Comprehensive Fix You Submitted With The Written Report And Concur or Recommend Changes.**

We will work with you to ensure that you accomplish the comprehensive fix.

a. If the HAZMAT Branch Manager determines that the proposed comprehensive fix is acceptable, we will issue a letter of correction that includes the dates by which you must complete the comprehensive fix.

b. After we issue the letter of correction, the case is closed but remains subject to reopening if you do not complete the agreed-upon actions covered in the comprehensive fix to our satisfaction.

c. The HAZMAT Branch Manager has the authority to close the case..

#### **11. You Carry Out Your Comprehensive Fix And Conduct A Subsequent Audit.**

a. During the implementation period, we will continue to work with you. We may advise and assist you in correcting any identified systemic problems. You may change the corrective action(s) outlined in the comprehensive fix, if we concur with the change. When both parties agree to a change to a comprehensive fix, the HAZMAT Branch Manager will prepare an amended letter of correction that reflects this change.

b. Throughout the implementation period, we will assess and monitor your corrective efforts and top management's awareness of these efforts. If, during this period, we determine that the steps you taken are not those documented in the comprehensive fix, we may rescind the letter of correction, reopen the Enforcement Investigative Report, and start appropriate legal enforcement action.

c. You then finish the agreed-upon comprehensive fix, which includes a self-audit to ensure that the corrective action taken prevents a recurrence of the noncompliance.

**12. The HAZMAT Branch Manager Makes a Final Assessment.**

a. At the conclusion of the implementation period, the HAZMAT Branch Manager makes a final assessment. If all elements of the comprehensive fix have been adequately accomplished, we will prepare a follow-up statement confirming the fix is satisfactory. The statement is placed in the Enforcement Investigative Report.

b. If the same or similar violations are discovered after we finish an Enforcement Investigative Report, we will not reopen the case unless we determine that you failed to carry out one or more of the elements of the comprehensive fix that the parties agreed on.

**13. Dispute Resolution.**

If a dispute occurs regarding FAA's acceptance of the proposed comprehensive fix or a modification to the originally accepted comprehensive fix, the HAZMAT Branch Manager or you may request that the issue be resolved at the next level of management within the FAA. The next level of management is the Regional Security and Hazardous Materials Division Manager.

**14. Applicability of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to Voluntary Disclosure Records Submitted Under This AC.**

FAA will protect records submitted for review under this voluntary disclosure reporting program to the extent allowed by law.

**15. Repeated Violations After You Complete The Comprehensive fix.**

If a repeat violation occurs after you complete the satisfactory fix, the procedures outlined in this AC may apply to the disclosure of the repeated violation. We will determine whether the repeat violation accepted under this AC in each case, after evaluating the facts and circumstances surrounding the repeated violation.

**16. For more information, contact the Regional HAZMAT Branch Manager (see Appendix II).**

Lynne A. Osmus  
Assistant Administrator, Office of  
Security and Hazardous Materials

**APPENDIX I. SAMPLE FORMAT TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN SUBMITTING THE WRITTEN REPORT AS OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 8 OF THIS AC.**

This is a suggested format to be used when preparing the written report to the Appropriate Regional HAZMAT Branch Manager. While an air operator or foreign air carrier should include at least all the elements specified below, the structure of the written report can be modified by the air operator or foreign air carrier to fit its particular needs.

**A. General.**

1. Date.
2. Certificate type or equivalent.
3. Pertinent air carrier or foreign air carrier number or equivalent.
4. Company name.
5. Company address.
6. Company official filing report.
  - a. Name.
  - b. Position.
  - c. Telephone number.

**B. Description Of Apparent Violation.**

1. Applicable 14 CFR and 49 CFR.
2. Date apparent violation was discovered.
3. Location of discovery.
4. Company official who discovered the apparent violation.
  - a. Name.
  - b. Position.
  - c. Telephone number.
5. Date and time of initial notification to the Appropriate Regional HAZMAT Branch Manager.
6. Name of HAZMAT Branch Manager notified.
7. Company official making notification.

- a. Name.
- b. Position.
- c. Telephone number.

**8. Duration of time apparent violation remained undetected.**

- a. Hours.
- b. Cycles.
- c. Days.

**C. Summary Of Apparent Violation.**

The summary should be a brief statement that describes the nature of the apparent violation and identifies the specific aircraft and hazardous material/substance, and/or individuals associated with the apparent violation.

**D. Immediate Action.**

- 1. When the immediate action was taken.
- 2. Description of the immediate action. (This description should outline the immediate steps that were taken to cease the apparent violation.)
- 3. Company official responsible for the immediate action.
  - a. Name.
  - b. Position.
  - c. Telephone number.

**E. Analysis.**

- 1. Summary of evidence. (This summary should describe the scope of the apparent violation and explain how it was detected. In addition, conclusions reached regarding possible or probable systemic deficiencies, i.e., who, what, when, where, why, and how the noncompliance occurred, should be described.)
- 2. Reasons why the apparent violation was inadvertent.
- 3. Supporting documentation. (The evidence associated with the apparent violation should be attached. This evidence should include a statement regarding how the air operator or foreign air carrier determined the extent of the apparent violation.)



**F. Comprehensive Fix .** The corrective steps and actions proposed by the air operator or foreign air carrier to prevent the apparent violation from recurring should be listed in this section. Each corrective step should identify the individual or department responsible for implementing and completing the corrective step and the time allotted for completion of each corrective step. Examples of types of questions or issues that a comprehensive fix should address are as follows:

- (1) Whether the apparent violation involves equipment facilities, or individuals beyond those addressed in the initial notification and for which immediate action was taken.
- (2) Whether procedural or organizational changes are necessary.
- (3) How it will be determined whether any procedural or organizational changes are effective.
- (4) What procedures will be developed to ensure that the affected area is periodically reviewed in the future so that concerns can be identified before a violation occurs?
- (5) Who will be responsible for performing periodic reviews?
- (6) To whom in the air operator's and foreign air carrier's organization will the results of those periodic reviews be reported, and how will they be documented?

**G. Responsibility For Monitoring The Implementation Of The Comprehensive Fix.**

- (1) Name.
- (2) Position.
- (3) Telephone number.
- (4) Signature.

**H. FAA Acceptance (To Be Completed By The FAA).**

- (1) Name.
- (2) Position (Regional HAZMAT Branch Manager).
- (3) Date.
- (4) Office.
- (5) Signature.

**APPENDIX II. FAA's Regional HAZMAT Office Phone Numbers**

New England Region  
Burlington, MA  
PHONE: (781) 238-7705  
FAX: (781) 238-7716

Eastern Region  
Jamaica, NY  
PHONE: (718) 553-2596  
FAX: (718) 977-6720

Southern Region  
Atlanta, GA  
PHONE: (404) 305-6831  
FAX: (404) 305-6754

Great Lakes Region  
Des Plain, IL  
PHONE: (847) 294-7414  
FAX: (847) 294-7816

Central Region  
St. Ann, MO  
PHONE: (314) 890-4842  
FAX: (314) 890-4842

Southwest Region  
Ft. Worth, TX  
PHONE: (817) 222-5720  
FAX: (817) 222-5990

Western Pacific Region  
Lawndale, CA  
PHONE: (310) 725-3701  
FAX: (310) 725-6879

Northwest Mountain Region  
Renton, WA  
PHONE: (425) 227-2706  
FAX: (425) 227-2706